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Hanszen Laporte to Defend \$100 Million Free Speech Case

A top-flight team of Hanszen Laporte lawyers will take over the defense of a \$100,000,000 federal defamation suit filed by Denton, Texas, attorney Jason Van Dyke against Arizona resident Thomas Retzlaff. The Hanszen Laporte team will be led by Jeffrey L. Dorrell, and will include Anthony L. Laporte and Kent M. Hanszen.

Van Dyke claims Retzlaff libeled him, invaded his privacy, and “tortiously interfered” with a contract by complaining about Van Dyke to the State Bar of Texas. The State Bar initially dismissed Retzlaff’s complaint, but after the board of disciplinary appeals reinstated it, Van Dyke sued. Retzlaff has asked the court to dismiss the suit as a baseless attack on his rights of free speech and to petition. State law protects citizens from baseless lawsuits brought to chill the exercise of constitutional rights.

Van Dyke alleges Retzlaff called him a “Nazi” and a “white supremacist,” and that this caused a job offer from the Victoria County, Texas, district attorney to be withdrawn. Retzlaff responds that the public had a right to know the truth about Van Dyke before hiring him to prosecute felony crimes, and alleges Van Dyke is a leader of the “Proud Boys,” a 5,000-member organization that the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated a hate group. Retzlaff also alleges Van Dyke has published racist threats on social media and other Internet sites.

“Free speech is vital to American democracy,” said Dorrell, “and is meaningless unless citizens can say things others may not like.” Dorrell added, “Sometimes the truth is difficult to hear.”

“My daughter Brittany and I are delighted that Hanszen Laporte agreed to take on this case, and confident in our team. We look forward to bringing the truth to light,” said Retzlaff.

Court papers show Van Dyke has a history of filing defamation lawsuits against members of the press and other critics for making statements about him he does not like.

For more information, contact:

Jeffrey L. Dorrell
jdorrell@hanszenlaporte.com
Hanszen Laporte, LLP
713-522-9444